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**SOURCES OF CONFLICT IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

**BY**

**RALPH D. ANDERSON**

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This paper reviews critically some of the more significant recent writings about the future security environment dealing with sources of conflict in the twenty-first century. The writings reviewed range between the unabashed optimism of Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" (the history of violent conflict at any rate) and Robert Kaplan's pessimistic and grim "global anarchy" -- a veritable worldwide descent into political, environmental and societal chaos.

It is the author's conclusion that the forces acting in and on the security environment in the twenty-first century, while they can be identified with some degree of certainty, are so many, complex, interactive and at times contradictory that attempts to predict future conflicts are problematic. Never the less, they are vital to an understanding of the current and future international security environment and a vital part of the process by which a viable national security strategy is developed.



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## SOURCES OF CONFLICT IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The dissolution of the former Soviet Union and the resolution of the Cold War at the end of the last decade prompted a spate of articles and books about the likely "new world order" of nations and their relations. An important aspect of the writings on this new order for those interested in security affairs is the most significant sources of potential conflict within and between nations or societies. This paper first reviews and compares the works of some of the more prominent authors on this topic. It then attempts to evaluate their works in terms of the common theories of prediction; notes the difficulties in predicting future events in the social sciences; and suggests an appropriate course of action for policy planners dealing with international security affairs.

Prediction in the area of the social, as opposed to the physical, sciences is always a risky business. In Henrik Ibsen's play Hedda Gabler, the following exchange occurs:

"LOVBORG: *This new effort is my real book--the one I have put my heart and soul into. ...It deals with the future.*"

"TESSMAN: *With the future! But good heavens! We know nothing of the future!*"

"LOVBORG: No. But there is a thing or two to be said about it all the same."

It is the central point of this paper that, while one may not be able to predict with certainty the future sources of conflict, it is nevertheless useful to consider these sources and how they might differ from those operative now.

### The Predictive Method

Noted futurologist Nicholas Rescher has written that the most salient points about the future are that it doesn't yet exist, that it unavoidably will, and that one can have only very incomplete information about its nature.<sup>1</sup> Yet, he adds, "Foreknowledge regarding the developments of the future -- or even only plausible surmise about it -- is of immense practical and theoretical importance to us."<sup>2</sup> It is the practical importance that interests us here; through a better understanding of the processes and systems likely to be operative in the future one can better plan for, and perhaps affect, desired future outcomes.

To begin, it is useful to summarize current thinking about prediction and the predictive process as they apply to the social sciences. Rescher describes two broad categories of prediction: formal and judgmental or rational. Regarding the

former, he identifies four types of prediction based on the most common form, pattern fitting. These are: 1) trend projection--the linear extrapolation of prevailing trends; 2) curve fitting--basically, non-linear trend extrapolation; 3) cyclical analysis-- in which events progress as a series of wave-like pulsations; and 4) circumstantial analogy--attributing the pattern of developments in one domain to that of another.<sup>3</sup> Pattern fitting requires that relevant data be available and a pattern in that data be discernable. To be successful, it also requires that the pattern remain stable over time.

Stearns proposes that the safest short-term predictions are those based on extrapolation from, or projections of, current trends.<sup>4</sup> This, he argues, is because significant changes in direction are uncommon in any field over the short run. Nevertheless, he cites three potential vulnerabilities of trend extrapolation: the first is the possibly inaccurate identification of current trends; the second is the possible intervention of unanticipated factors; and the third is the difficulty in anticipating the ramifications or unintended consequences of the correctly identified trends.<sup>5</sup>

In addressing the analogy method of prediction, Stearns notes that analogy is inherently inexact -- it is uncertain whether two significant situations, one in the past and one in the present, ever have enough in common to warrant the drawing

of parallels in a predictive sense.<sup>6</sup> He points out the long-standing tradition in diplomatic and military analysis to look to past examples in international affairs or from battle strategy as a guide to future policy.<sup>7</sup> However, many situations are simply not susceptible to analogy. He offers as an example the "disappearance" in the late twentieth century of effectively functioning states in parts of sub-Saharan Africa (Rwanda, Somalia).<sup>8</sup>

Rational prediction, the second of Rescher's two typologies, requires some sort of linkage between the predictive claim and the input data upon which it is based. The linkage can be based on explicitly articulated principles or laws (explanatory regularities) or based on the personal judgement of knowledgeable experts. Together with pattern fitting, the latter comprises the most common predictive method in the social sciences, including international and security affairs. It follows that confidence in such predictions necessarily relies on the correctness of the inferential principles involved, or on the competency of the experts.<sup>9</sup>

Rescher also identifies several impediments to predictive endeavor.<sup>10</sup> They include anarchy -- the absence of regularities or principles as linking mechanisms; uncertainty --ignorance of the operative laws or processes; volatility -- the absence of situational stability; inadequate data or ignorance of it;

inferential incapacity -- the inability to infer from the available data; and finally, chance, chaos, change and innovation. By way of further explanation, he notes that the condition of anarchy is one of genuine "patternlessness," and the future conditions of such a situation cannot be foreseen on the basis of past or present data. He also posits that volatility and instability of pattern rank next to anarchy as the major obstacles to effective prediction.<sup>11</sup> The complexity and non-linearity inherent in social systems makes prediction in this arena particularly problematic.

Looking at the question of whether historical analysis can serve as an effective tool for divining the future, Rescher somewhat humorously describes six themes or schools prevalent among those using history as a window into the future.<sup>12</sup> According to the "progressive school," the order of things is getting better. Among the notable historians and thinkers Rescher assigns to this school are Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, Herbert Spencer and Karl Marx.

For the "retrogressive school," on the other hand, things are getting progressively worse. In this school Rescher places Xenophanes, Max Nordau, and the fin de siecle theorists. He finds that for the "stabilitarian school" (including Schopenhauer), things remain pretty much the same qualitatively, while for the "cyclic school" of history (Spengler, Toynbee),

change occurs in a pattern of ebbs and flows. Opposed to the aforementioned structural views of history is the anarchic or stochastic school - "just one damn thing after another."

However, Rescher's personal favorite is what he calls "punctuated chaos," a period of local stability interrupted at random intervals by chaotic transitions to a new and unpredictably different, but again temporarily stable, order. He concludes there is no real rationality to the historical process, but even punctuated chaos is a structure which allows for various predictions, especially over the short term.

Finally, before assessing some of the more influential writers on future sources of conflict, it is useful to provide some ideas for evaluating their predictions. According to Stearns, predictions based on extrapolation should convey a valid sense of existing trends, and reasons, beyond simple momentum, for believing that they will persist. This should include reasons for confidence that nothing looming on the time horizon is likely to deflect the trend line.<sup>13</sup> Analogies should be examined for the appropriateness of the chosen historical example and for the contention that it legitimately provides a guide for understanding a forthcoming change. Lastly, one should assess the number of factors that the prediction embraces. Predictions, says Stearns, should not be totally deterministic (based on one set of criteria without allowing for

the full range of operative factors.<sup>14</sup> Evaluating monocausal predictions is more difficult, and they warrant the most skepticism, but those which at least explain the relation of cause to effect are said to be the more compelling.

### Structural Sources of Conflict

Certain aspects of the structure of the international system are thought by some authorities to lead to conflict, to make conflict more or less likely under various circumstances, or to render conflict on a global scale unlikely or obsolete. Moreover, the way one views the current nature of the international system and how one defines the most important actors in that system can have a significant impact on identifying future sources of conflict.

The sources and likelihood of conflict in the future are generally perceived differently, for example, according to whether one subscribes to the realist, neo-realist or liberal views of international relations. In his article "Contending Theories of International Conflict," Jack S. Levy notes that the realist paradigm has traditionally dominated the literature on the causes of war at the systemic level.<sup>15</sup> In the realist paradigm the key actors are sovereign nation-states. They can be expected act rationally to advance their interests in an

anarchic international system. The world is inherently conflictual and is uncertain as to the future intentions of potential adversaries. As Levy sees it, balance of power is the leading realist theory: it postulates the avoidance of hegemony as the first objective of states and maintenance of equilibrium in power as their instrumental goal.

Further, for a "realist" the prospects for conflict will vary according to whether the system is considered bi-polar or multi-polar. Levy notes a division exists between "classical realists," who claim stability is enhanced by a balancing state or the absence of permanent alliances, but especially by a multi-polar distribution of power, and "neo-realists," who argue that bi-polarity is more stable than multi-polarity.<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Waltz writes that "an important issue for a structural theory to address is whether destabilizing conditions and events are better managed in multi-polar or bipolar systems."<sup>17</sup> There appears to be little agreement on this in the political science community.

Geoffrey Blainey, in "Power, Culprits and Arms"<sup>18</sup> notes that most believers in the balance of power theory think that a world with many powerful states tends to be less conflict-prone because an aggressive state is likely to be counterbalanced by a combination of other strong states (which presumably have shared interests). However, he counters that this has not been borne

out in recent history: "To my knowledge no historian or political scientist [has] produced evidence to confirm that a power system of several strong states was more conducive to peace than a system of two strong states."<sup>19</sup>

John J. Mearsheimer, in "Why We Will Soon Miss the Cold War," contends that a bipolar system is inherently more peaceful than a multi-polar one, and both bi- and multi-polar systems tend to be more peaceful when power is distributed evenly.<sup>20</sup> Inequalities, he believes, invite conflict and war because they increase an aggressor's prospects for victory. However, here Blainey disagrees, based on the historical record.<sup>21</sup> In the period between 1700 and 1815, he notes, periods of peace coincided with those times when one European alliance held a clear preponderance of power, normally at the conclusion of a decisive war. Decisive wars tended to promote longer periods of peace.

Two conflict theories discussed by Levy under the realist rubric are "power transition theory" and "hierarchical equilibrium theory."<sup>22</sup> According to the former theory, while hegemons act to enforce norms of international behavior which enhance stability, that stability is disrupted by differential rates of development among nations, leading to the rise of new, and fall of old, hegemes. Hierarchical equilibrium theory is actually a combination of balance of power and power transition.

According to it, peace is most likely under equality of power between two blocs, each being dominated by a hegemon; the erosion of authority within a bloc will increase the probability of violent conflict.

The liberal paradigm, or its 1960s companion known as "modernization theory," sees recent Western history as providing a pattern that other societies are increasingly following.<sup>23</sup> A host of changes have been occurring which have combined to produce a desirable international political and economic structure. These changes have included the spread of education, the advance of science, the advent of liberal democracy and the professional bureaucracy, the near universality of market economies, the embracing of new technologies and medical procedures, and the ascendance of such values as humanitarianism, individualism and progress. While modernism does not explain such changes, its expectation is that they will spread throughout the world through emulation.

G. John Ikenberry, a University of Pennsylvania political scientist, claims in his 1996 Foreign Affairs article "The Myth of Post-Cold War Chaos," claims that the world order created principally by the U.S. in the middle to late 1940s endures. This international order is manifested in the major Western liberal democracies through a "dense web of multilateral institutions, intergovernmental relations and joint management

of the Western and world political economies.<sup>24</sup> Security and stability, at least in the West, are seen as depending on an array of institutions, such as the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (now the World Trade Organization), that tie the democracies together, constrain conflict and facilitate community. Ikenberry acknowledges that large parts of the non-Western world are suffering a difficult transformation, and the future of the former communist states remains problematic.<sup>25</sup> And he recognizes "challenges" to the system in the future. He finds, for example, that economic globalization is producing much greater inequality between the "winners" and the "losers," and offers that "how the subsequent dislocations, dashed expectations and political grievances are dealt with... will affect the stability of the liberal world order more than regional conflict, however tragic...."<sup>26</sup>

The most renowned proponent of liberal theory probably is Francis Fukuyama, whose 1989 Rand Corporation study "Have We Reached the End of History?" became a thought provoking, if not controversial, article by a similar name in the Summer 1989 issue of National Interest. In a nutshell, Fukuyama postulated the demise of the former Soviet Union as evidence of the ultimate triumph of liberal democratic ideology - "...an unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism" (though

acknowledging this victory has occurred primarily in the realm of ideas, being as yet incomplete in the material world.<sup>27</sup> Critics of Fukuyama's piece note that while there has been to date no successful ideological challenge to the West, and while the desirability of democratic freedom and capitalistic prosperity is widely recognized, neither the former communist nor third world society is likely to be able to emulate them successfully.<sup>28</sup> And as Gertrude Himmelfarb notes in her commentary on Fukuyama's article in the National Interest, "Mr. Fukuyama comes rather late to the possibility that religion, nationalism, race, and ethnicity might emerge as 'ideological competitors' to liberal democracy...."<sup>29</sup>

Within the liberal paradigm, another systemic theory of conflict is the liberal economic theory of war.<sup>30</sup> According to this theory, free trade within an international market economy promotes peace because trade increases mutual interdependence and creates mutual vulnerabilities. On the other hand, realists and economic nationalists argue that because trade and interdependence are usually asymmetrical they can tend to promote war through attempts by nations to gain advantage or exploit vulnerabilities.

The relevance of the discussion above to an assessment of future sources of conflict, of course, depends in part on whether one believes that the future structure of the

international system will be bi- or multipolar. And in turn depends on, among other factors, whether the nation-state remains a viable concept or, at least, a significant actor in the twenty-first century. About this, expert opinion varies.

Stearns writes that while the nation-state has been the main unit of political organization at the international level for the past 200 years, the trend may not continue far into the twenty-first century.<sup>31</sup> As challenges to the primacy of the nation-state in the twenty-first century he cites the increasingly global economy (with its multi-national corporations), increasing migration, and the probable expansion of international organizations. Keniche Ohmae has written in The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy: "inevitably, the emergence of the interlinked economy brings with it an erosion of national sovereignty as the power of information directly touches local communities; academic, professional, and social institutions; corporations; and individuals."<sup>32</sup>

In the view of Paul Kennedy, writing in his 1994 book Preparing for the Twenty-first Century, the global changes ongoing call into question the utility of the nation-state itself. He believes the attendant "upward and outward relocation of authority" from the nation-state, toward transnational and international entities, is being paralleled by

the emergence of supra-national organizations of a regional sort.<sup>33</sup> This, he argues, will lead to the relocation of authority "downward," carrying with it the risk of national disintegration, particularly in societies where ethnic or cultural rivalries and disputed boundaries fuel regional differences. Even more pessimistic about the future of the nation-state is Martin van Creveld, a military historian at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Robert Kaplan in his controversial 1994 Atlantic Monthly article entitled "The Coming Anarchy" cites Creveld's view that the period of nation-states and state-oriented conflict is ending, and with them Clausewitz's trinity of the government, the army and the people.<sup>34</sup>

A more balanced view is that of Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, who describes, in Transnational Religion and Fading States, the evolution of the nation-state as not leading to its demise or collapse, but rather to the "thinning" of its effect, function and finality.<sup>35</sup> In her view, the creation of transnational spaces through markets, media and communications may form networks and solidarities that circumvent the Westphalian state system, with its emphasis on territoriality and sovereignty, but "they do not replace state-defined spaces, they provide alternatives to it." Jack Snyder, in "Nationalism and the Crisis of the Post-Soviet State" on the other hand, finds that

"recent European developments confirm the centrality of the state and its links with nationalism."<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps the most useful view of the structural evolution of the international system, encompassing aspects of the realist, neo-realist and liberal theories, is that of Alpo M. Rusi, who, in his 1997 book Dangerous Peace: New Rivalry in World Politics, describes the current system as "fragile multi-polarity."<sup>37</sup> As he sees it, there are three possible evolutions: 1) the emergence of a new bipolar system and the remilitarization of security; 2) the emergence of global economic and democratic space and the demilitarization of security; and 3) the continuation of "fragile multi-polarity" and the defacto remilitarization of security.<sup>38</sup> Regarding the third alternative future, Rusi notes, "every multi-polar system known in history has collapsed as one or more of the major powers expressed dissatisfaction with the existing hierarchy, rejected the rules on which they had agreed to manage their relations and attempted by force to overthrow the status quo."<sup>39</sup>

Professor Johan Galtung, in his essay "On the Future of the International System," postulates that the basic structural conditions for change (and conflict) in the international system stem from the incompatibilities between the nation-state and the social orders it contains or in which it is contained. Galtung offers four social orders: primitive, traditional, modern, and

neo-modern (more commonly called post-industrial).<sup>40</sup> On these stages of development he superimposes two assumptions: the progression of societies through the four stages, and the primacy of the nation-state as the fundamental actor/entity. Nation-states may contain one or more societies; conversely, a society may encompass one or more nations. He argues that most modern nation-states have segments representing societies in different stages of development, and some of these "intra-national" segments have ties to related segments in other nations. These ties constitute what he classifies as "cross-national" social orders.<sup>41</sup>

Turning conflict analysis on its head, Galtung then identifies three associative conditions for international or domestic peace.<sup>42</sup> The first is symbiotic and symmetrical cooperation between nations or societies resulting in mutual and egalitarian interdependence. The second is what he describes as "high entropy" between actors and in the system of interaction (random interactions). Ideally there would be no clearly defined fronts in the system. The third requirement for the absence of conflict in Galtung's schema is the presence of a large number of "supra-group" organizations (international governmental and non-governmental organizations) which are both egalitarian and entropic. Systems organized along these lines,

he predicts, will have higher conflict absorbing and conflict resolving capacities.

In Galtung's view, societies at different levels of development find it difficult to achieve relations that are both symbiotic and symmetrical.<sup>43</sup> More common are patterns of exploitation by the more developed of the less developed society within and across national boundaries. He refers to these patterns as external colonization if they exist between nations and internal colonization if they exist within a nation. A common form of the latter is the exploitation of the traditional, rural sector of a society by the modern, urbanized sector. Interaction between nations tends to promote the emergence of a modern or neo-modern leadership class or elite regardless of a nation's overall level of development.<sup>44</sup> The natural consequence is that internally the gap between the most and least developed segments of society is greater where the nation is less developed, and, as a result, less stable or cohesive.

Galtung foresees trends in less developed nations toward internal antagonisms requiring domestic or foreign military intervention up to and including the removal of civilian leadership. He believes relations within less developed nations are likely to be characterized increasingly by inter-group conflict between racial and ethnic groups, classes, and tribes.

This is because of the absence of symbiotic relationships, the low level of entropy (caused by tribal boundaries, well-defined class lines, or segregation.<sup>45</sup>

Galtung observes that in the less developed world, the societies are "growing into their nation-states," which are being seen as increasingly relevant in their societies. As a result, he sees their populations as a whole becoming increasingly nationalistic.<sup>46</sup> Between less developed nations, Galtung predicts occasional external warfare for essentially the same structural reasons he cites regarding internal conflict -- lack of symbiosis, lack of symmetry in relations, low levels of entropy and weak supra-national institutions.<sup>47</sup>

Among the developed nations, on the other hand, he predicts steadily increasing "interpenetration and intermeshing" using international governmental and non-governmental entities as organizing structures and individuals with cross-, trans-, and supra-national identities as building blocks, leading to increasing permeability of national boundaries.<sup>48</sup> Susanne Rudolph envisions the development of a "liminal space," a space neither within the state nor an aspect of the international system, but which cuts across both.<sup>49</sup> She sees this liminal space as becoming increasingly occupied by communities with common world views, interests and practices.

Nonetheless, large nations, in Galtung's view, will be more apt to retain a strong national concept of interests and continue to perceive each other somewhat competitively. The degree to which nationalism causes conflict, according to Snyder, is based in part on the degree to which parochial interests favoring international conflict align themselves with nationalist movements. Nationalism frequently finds natural allies among the military, military-related industries and protectionist economic sectors.<sup>50</sup>

In his seminal work, Diplomacy, Henry Kissinger has written:

The international system will be marked by a seeming contradiction: on the one hand, fragmentation; on the other, growing globalization. On the level of the relations among states, the new order will be more like the European state system of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.... At the same time, international relations have become truly global for the first time. Communications are instantaneous; the world economy operates on all continents simultaneously. A whole set of issues has surfaced that can only be dealt with on a worldwide basis, such as nuclear proliferation, the environment, the population, and economic interdependence.<sup>51</sup>

According to Galtung, while processes/forces of both fission and fusion will continue to operate on nation-states, in the international system fusion forces will dominate, leading to confederations of nation-states rather than more autonomous nation-states or supra-states.<sup>52</sup> The rapid internationalization

of political ideologies is foreseen, and with it the concomitant internationalization of foreign policy. This will lead to a relatively complete interdependence coordinated through a network of supra-national and supra-regional organizations. Increasing integration of military forces is also foreseen, with the expansion of non-aggression and arms control treaties, mutual inspection regimes and exchanges of military observers.<sup>53</sup>

Mathew Connolly and Paul Kennedy, in a 1994 Atlantic Monthly article, "Must It be the West Against the Rest?", offer a view of the world as bifurcated into a rich West (including Japan) with an aging population and below replacement birthrates, and a poor "the rest," where populations double every twenty-five years.<sup>54</sup> Galtung concludes, however, that a large-scale class war between rich and poor nations is unlikely because of the latter's generally competitive or exploitative relations, debilitating internal conditions and insufficiency of military power. Moreover, he predicts rich nations will engage in military operations to prevent an international class war, and large scale interventions by the rich nations in poor nations engaged in internal or external warfare.<sup>55</sup> Lastly, he predicts the rapid escalation of generational conflict involving the "older generation's" inability to adapt to increasingly rapid social change, as well as competition for employment and leadership.

To conclude this section on the various views of the structural causes of international conflict and the international structure in which future conflicts will likely occur, and to introduce the sections that follow, it is useful to consider briefly some of the identifiable forces operative in the international system. Using the "levels of analysis" approach first systematized by Kenneth Waltz in his 1959 Man, the State and War, Levy argues that different conflictual forces operate at the levels of the individual, the nation-state, and the international system.<sup>56</sup>

At the individual level, he believes human nature and instinct theories, as well as leadership personalities, are instructive. However, he finds individual beliefs not useful for predictive purposes because they are not knowable sufficiently far in advance and do not lend themselves to generalizations across space and time.<sup>57</sup> At the national level, he identifies political, economic and social forces, as well as ethnicity and nationalism. Finally, at the international level he sees the distribution of economic and military power and the nature and number of major actors (a uni-, bi- or multi-polar world order) among which they are distributed as being determinant.<sup>58</sup>

In a multi-polar world, Waltz posits, responsibilities are unclear and vital interests are easily obscured but dangers are

diffused; miscalculation by some or all of the great powers is a source of danger. In a bipolar world, on the other hand, overreaction by either or both of the great powers is a source of danger. Miscalculation is considered the greater threat because it is considered more likely to lead to events ultimately threatening the status quo and drawing the conflicting powers into war.<sup>59</sup> Unipolarity as a tool for U.S. interests (the U.S. is generally projected as the only superpower into the first decade of the twenty-first century at least) is likely, according to Rusi, to lead to conflicts with other powers. "Differences of interest will force others [powers] to develop counter-powers to U.S. unilateralism, hastening the demise of unipolarity."<sup>60</sup>

Rusi also claims that in terms of utility, a shift from a military-political combination of "hard power" to a knowledge-based/economic/political combination of "soft power" has been occurring at the end of the twentieth century and this will define the beginnings of the twenty-first century.<sup>61</sup> As Kissinger expresses it, "the various elements [of power] are likely to grow more congruent and more symmetrical." "Thus, the operation of the new international system will move toward equilibrium, even in the military field, though it may take some decades to reach that point."<sup>62</sup>

### Non-structural Sources of Conflict

In his November 1996 Current History article entitled "The New Global Schisms," Michael Klare notes that it is becoming increasingly clear the major sources of conflicts in the twenty-first century will not always be definable in geopolitical terms.<sup>63</sup> As Betts writes, "Some potential sources of conflict transcend borders and may not be caused or controlled by specific governments."<sup>64</sup> Severe and persistent threats to global peace and stability in the future are as apt to rise from increased discord within states, societies and civilizations along ethnic, racial, religious, or class lines as from conflict between states.

Economic, demographic, sociological, resource and environmental stresses are exacerbating existing divisions within societies and creating new divisions. "Where certain conditions prevail -- a widening gulf between rich and poor, severe economic competition between neighboring ethnic and religious communities, the declining habitability of marginal lands -- internal conflict is likely to erupt."<sup>65</sup> In this section, each of these factors will be considered as to their significance as sources of conflict in the next century.

### Religion as a Cause of Conflict

Religion as a source of conflict has been much in vogue during the past decade. In his 1996 book, The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order, noted author on military and international affairs Samuel P. Huntington wrote: "millennia of human history have shown that religion is not a 'small difference' but possibly the most profound difference that can exist between people."<sup>66</sup> Huntington sees a "global revival" of religion occurring at the same time that economic and social modernization have become global.<sup>67</sup> All of the world's major religions have experienced surges in commitment, relevance and practice. In all of them, fundamentalist movements have arisen committed to the militant purification of doctrines and the reshaping of personal and public behavior in accordance with religious tenets. "If practice and belief of religious formations can, at various levels, orient and facilitate collective action and provide security, they can also generate conflict."<sup>68</sup>

For Mark Juergensmeyer, writing in his The New Cold War: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State, "it has become increasingly clear that religious nationalists are more than just fanatics; they are political activists seriously attempting to reformulate the modern language of politics and

provide a new basis for the nation-state."<sup>69</sup> They can, he says, be hostile, dogmatic and violent, and threaten a confrontation with secular governments that is global in reach. Religious activists are characterized by both religious and political interests, he claims, and there can be no real convergence between religious and secular political ideologies. At the level of ideology, he says, this "new cold war will" persist into the twenty-first century.<sup>70</sup>

Moreover, the rhetoric of warfare is prominent in both modern and traditional religions, and military metaphors are common in exhortations to the faithful (the Islamic jihad is perhaps the most notable example but the Protestant hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers" also comes to mind). Rudolph points out that "religions often provide not only the language and symbols but also the motives for cultural conflict between and within states...."<sup>71</sup> Juergensmeyer notes that most religious nationalists are able to find within their traditions a justification for violence to apply to their current revolutionary situations.<sup>72</sup>

As Rudolph notes, religious communities may be either "conciliatory components of civil societies or sources of alienation, distrust and conflict."<sup>73</sup> Religion can be an important component of identities which define domestic conflicts. Serious internal conflicts can occur when a religious minority claims a separate (from the host nation)

political identity, as Catholics have done in Northern Ireland.<sup>74</sup> Other examples can be found on the Indian subcontinent, where clashes between Muslim and Hindu fundamentalists and between Hindus and Catholics, and in southeast Asia, where tense and occasionally violent relations between Muslims, nominally Confucian Chinese and Christian communities, may be expected to continue at low levels well into the next century.

Of all the potential religious sources of conflict, none has generated more interest, rhetoric and concern than what is variously called "Islamic fundamentalism," "Islamic nationalism," "radical" or "political Islam," "Islamism" or the Islamic "revival." Perhaps this is because, since the demise of Marxism-Leninism as a "secular religion," Islam is the only significant transnational ideological force with the potential to serve as an alternative to Western liberalism as a template for social organization.<sup>75</sup> More likely it is in part because of the age old conflict between Islam and Western Christianity extending from the seventh century, through the Crusades, the Ottoman threat and nineteenth century European colonial expansion. But most likely it is because of the popular association of radical Islam with extreme anti-Westernism and terrorism.<sup>76</sup>

Graham E. Fuller indicates Islam is likely to play an increasing role in the political, social and economic arenas.<sup>77</sup>

He identifies four reasons for this. One is the fact that it is a native cultural vehicle for dissent and expression of nationalist grievances against the West. The second is that Islam is especially strong among the lower middle class, which is growing in salience in the Muslim world. A third reason is the tendencies for Islamic organizations to focus on the stresses of urbanization. And, lastly, increasing access of Islamists to the media and government will accompany the process of democratization.

Huntington predicts increasing conflict in the future between Islam and the West.<sup>78</sup> He sees Muslim population growth generating large numbers of unemployed and disaffected youth, a potent source of instability. Juergensmeyer, writing of the Islamic opposition's surprising showing in the 1991-92 Algerian elections, notes that its success was fueled by a 28 percent unemployment rate, 20 percent inflation, and a population 70 percent of which was under 25 years of age.<sup>79</sup>

Nevertheless, there is a growing body of academic opinion that the Islamic revival is, in Rusi's words, "in essence a social reaction to the modernization of Arab societies, much as fascism was in Europe in the 1930s."<sup>80</sup> He goes on to say that Islamic fundamentalism will not solve the current problems in Arab societies, and, despite its appeal, it is likely to be overshadowed in the future "either by emerging stability through

economic and political modernization, or by Arab nationalistic order."

Even Huntington points out that by the mid-1990s, explicitly Islamist groups had come to power in only two countries, Iran and Sudan.<sup>81</sup> In fact, Graham Fuller points out that Islamism (the more accurate term in his view) faces a number of obstacles in coming to power.<sup>82</sup> Among these are the current absence of a charismatic leader, general opposition by the Arab militaries, and serious divisions within the Islamists' own ranks. Looking forward, Huntington takes the uncharacteristically optimistic view that the aging of Muslim societies, in conjunction with the possibility of economic development, could lead to a significant reduction in "Muslim violence propensities" in the third decade of the twenty-first century.<sup>83</sup>

It must be noted that Islamism is not the only strong or potentially conflictual religious force likely to have an impact on the twenty-first century. Hinduism, while it does not possess the geographic scope or proselytizing vigor of Islam or Christianity, remains a significant player. According to Juergensmeyer, in terms of sheer numbers, the Bharatiya Janata (Hindu) Party in India is the largest movement of religious nationalism in the world.<sup>84</sup> But while Hindu-Muslim and Hindu-Christian violence does occur in India, Paul Brass argues in his

1997 book Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in Representation of Collective Violence that the public rhetoric concerning these events often serves to communalize as Hindu-Muslim confrontations what are often merely local disputes.<sup>85</sup> One Indian author, Sardar K. M. Panikkar, has characterized Hinduism in its conflict with colonial Great Britain as "...this disorganized and inchoate mass of sects and creeds with no defined dogma, no organized priesthood, no officially accepted scriptures, with its doctrines overgrown with superstition and primitive beliefs...."<sup>86</sup> Yet, he notes that although the advantages on the side of the West and Christianity seemed to be overwhelming, "after a century and a half, strangely enough, it was India and Hinduism that came out triumphant from the encounter."<sup>87</sup> Panikkar sees the principal clash between Hinduism and the Christian West as having occurred already, as others see the principal clash between Islam and the West as having ended with the Crusades or the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

Susanne Rudolph, in her essay "Dehomogenizing Religious Formations," summarizes by saying that religious formations as an aspect of transnational civil society demonstrate a wide variety of forms and a range of relationships to states.<sup>88</sup> In her view the most striking recent development with respect to form is the proliferation of popular religions "from below...." From the point of view of the nation-state, religions controlled

by societies' elites are both more predictable as a force and manipulable as entities. But in the last analysis, according to Rudolph, "religion is no master variable that will determine the political cleavages that lead to war, or the solidarities that promote peace."<sup>89</sup> In essence, religion represents only one potential division among many social cleavages that will influence the patterns of alliance or conflict which civil or state actors ultimately chose.

#### Ethnic Causes of Conflict

Late in the twentieth century the ethnic sources of conflict or ethnic conflict itself are too well known, owing to events in the Balkans and Sub-Saharan Africa, to require much elaboration. In an essay entitled "Minorities, Nationalists and Ethnopolitical Conflict," Ted Robert Gurr asserts that ethnopolitical conflict has been the most common source of warfare and insecurity for several decades.<sup>90</sup> By his count, at the beginning of 1996 there were forty-plus ethnopolitical conflicts ongoing; about half of these he judges to be at risk of escalation and to be likely sources of future humanitarian crises. Levy notes that while the "ancient hatreds" explanation of ethnic conflict is popular among journalists, scholars are more skeptical.<sup>91</sup> Academic concern, he says, has shifted toward

identifying the conditions which explain when and why ethnic conflicts occur, as well as where and how intense they are likely to be.

According to information compiled by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), ethnic and religious differences were prominent in twenty-eight of the thirty-one major armed conflicts ongoing in 1994.<sup>92</sup> Looking to the future, David Welsh writes, in his essay "Domestic Politics and Ethnic Conflict," that "Ethnic Conflict is not a problem which will disappear."<sup>93</sup> He points out that of the approximately 180 nation-states extant, fewer than twenty are ethnically homogeneous (in the sense that minorities account for less than five percent of the population). Klare writes that most analysts of the international scene believe such conflicts are likely to erupt repeatedly in the future.<sup>94</sup> In Gurr's view, an alarmist interpretation of the extent and persistence of ethnopolitical conflict is that the world is on course for anarchy (a la Kaplan) within and among states, and to polarization along Huntington's civilizational lines.<sup>95</sup>

#### Economic Causes of Conflict

Theodore H. Moran, writing in "Trade and Investment Dimensions of International Conflict," identifies six areas in

which trade and investment issues may generate conflict among nations.<sup>96</sup> The first is trade deficits and unfair trade practices. He notes that persistent trade deficits among economic powers may produce tension and conflict among the states involved. A second source of economic conflict is strategic trade rivalry. Economies of scale, technical proficiency and barriers to market entry dictate that only a limited number of firms will be able to engage in production which often has defense and security ramifications. Decisions as to where such industries are to be located and which measures governments take to ensure their possession can become sources of tension and conflict.

A third economic source of conflict identified by Moran is national and regional trade discrimination based on rules of origin, anti-dumping protectionism or national/regional subsidies. These discriminatory practices can result in closed and contentious economic or trading blocs. A fourth source of conflict is foreign investment in domestic economies, especially the foreign acquisition of critical domestic industries. The rapid expansion of foreign domestic investment and the predominance of investment through acquisition have the potential to generate tensions among nations. A national security threat may evolve from a nation being too dependent on foreign suppliers for critical goods and services. Moran's

fifth possible economic conflict generator is what he labels "outward investment" -- essentially resulting in the "hollowing out" of the domestic economic infrastructure through lack of investment there. While something of a popular perception, this, he argues, has not been borne out empirically.

The last source of economic tension identified by Moran is the cross-border "flow" or distribution of employment opportunities. The popular concern is the possible negative impact of open borders on the distribution of income and the migration of jobs, especially high-wage manufacturing jobs. This has been one of the principal U.S. domestic concerns regarding the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). An obvious source of tension in domestic politics, migration of employment opportunities can become a source of conflict among the governments involved, as well.

The academic community is divided as to the significance of growing global economic interdependence for the likelihood of conflict in the future. One's view as to whether, as Anthony D. Smith argues, "an economically globalized world has an intrinsic element of instability,"<sup>97</sup> or, as former Secretary of State Cordell Hull believed, the lowering of economic barriers will promote not only growth and prosperity but also peace and stability among nations, seems to depend on whether one accepts the primacy of economics in national decision making.<sup>98</sup> And

that, in turn seems to depend upon whether one subscribes to the liberal or realist theory of international relations.

Mearsheimer notes that according to the theory of economic liberalism, states are motivated primarily by the desire to achieve prosperity and leaders place the material welfare of their publics above other considerations, including security.<sup>99</sup> Stability, according to this view, flows not from military power but from the creation of a liberal economic order. Because a liberal economic order requires political cooperation to make the trading system work, it fosters political and economic interdependence and mutual vulnerability. Betts claims this, in turn, gives nations a stake in each other's security and prosperity.<sup>100</sup>

On the other hand, Mearsheimer argues that states are not primarily economically motivated. He says that although economic calculations are not trivial to their decision-making, states operate in both an international political and economic environment, "and the former dominates when the two systems come into conflict."<sup>101</sup> As the popular futurists Alvin and Amy Toffler point out, when Britain and Germany went to war with one another in 1914, each was the other's largest trading partner.<sup>102</sup> Interdependence, Mearsheimer believes, is as likely to lead to conflict as cooperation because states will seek to avoid the vulnerability that interdependence creates. Rusi writes that

"although the liberal democracies are presumably inclined to handle new economic conflicts peacefully, there is no certainty that a semi-democratic big power, let alone an authoritarian one, would limit promotion of its interests to peaceful means."<sup>103</sup> Or as the Tofflers put it, leaders in the future will still calculate their chances of seizing, retaining or expanding power via military means; they do not merely calculate the economic pluses and minuses.<sup>104</sup>

#### Resource-related Sources of Conflict

Closely related to economic causes of conflict are issues of resource scarcity or maldistribution. In an essay entitled "The Resource Dimension of International Conflict," Richard E. Bissell opines that "resources have been central to international conflict throughout history...."<sup>105</sup> Michael Klare notes the danger exists that acute scarcities could lead to armed interstate conflict over such vital resources as water, forests or energy supplies.<sup>106</sup> It may be argued that resource wars have already occurred over the Middle East's oil supplies and North Atlantic fisheries, and similar conflicts have emerged or will emerge over control of major water sources in areas of scarcity, such as the Nile, Tigris/Euphrates or Ganges watersheds.

Bissell classifies resources according to three types: 1) non-renewable/diminishing; 2) non-renewable but discoverable or substitutable; and 3) renewable but strategic.<sup>107</sup> The most fundamental or basic resource of the first type is land. It is non-renewable/diminishing in a useful sense and one of the most traditional sources of conflict. To the extent that population growth and exploitative methods of agriculture continue into the future, it will remain a source of conflict. On the other hand, urbanization and the adoption of high yield, non-exploitative methods of agriculture can be ameliorating factors. Among the most relevant to conflict in the second category -- non-renewable but discoverable or substitutable -- are energy sources.

Finally, the strategic quality of some renewable resources stems from their being indispensable to individual or national survival. Food and water fall into this category. Quoting the French poet Antoine de Saint Exupery, "water is not necessary to life but rather [is] life itself."<sup>108</sup> At a recent United Nations Human Settlement Conference, Habitat II, the UN Habitat Secretary General indicated that water is going to be the most hotly contested urban issue facing the world community in the twenty-first century.<sup>109</sup> And according to Dr. Per Pinstrup-Andersen, Director General of the International Food Policy Research Institute (speaking at a May 1996 conference on

international food issues), "the widespread food insecurity in developing countries today will threaten global stability tomorrow -- and undermine the prosperity of all nations."<sup>110</sup> Dr. Pinstrup-Andersen goes on to say that this "destabilized world of starvation and terrorism" will seriously disrupt international markets, leading to chaos in the Western world as well.

Bissell concludes that resource scarcity will continue to be an important aspect of conflict, as it has been in the past. As he sees it, sudden changes in resource needs and endowments in particular will destabilize the international system.<sup>111</sup> Levy, on the other hand, while acknowledging the possibility of "simple scarcity conflicts" or resource wars in the future, notes factors that he sees as reducing their likelihood.<sup>112</sup> One of these is the increasing ease with which nations will be able to obtain resources externally without controlling their sources, owing to the growing interdependence of the world economy. Another ameliorating factor will be technological advances that increase the possibility for domestic substitution.

#### Environmental Causes of Conflict

Closely akin to resource causes of conflict are

environmental factors -- what Kaplan describes as "the national security issue of the twenty-first century."<sup>113</sup> Deterioration of the global environment may be more than a quality of life issue. The deleterious effects of global warming (the "greenhouse effect"), desertification and drought, acid rain, ozone depletion, industrial pollution are well known. But, as Thomas Homer-Dixon has noted, some experts believe that environmental change may shift the balance of power between states, regionally or globally, producing instabilities which could lead to wars.<sup>114</sup> Michael Klare notes "these environmental effects will not be felt uniformly around the world but will threaten some states and groups more than others, producing new cleavages in human society."<sup>115</sup> The first to suffer will be those living in so-called marginal areas -- coastal lowlands, arid grazing areas or tropical rainforests.

As Homer-Dixon describes it, environmental conflict will likely first develop in the developing world because poor countries will generally be more vulnerable to environmental changes than wealthy ones.<sup>116</sup> Environmental pressures in developing countries will cause reduced agricultural production, population displacement, disruption of social relations and economic decline.

Homer-Dixon, perhaps the most pessimistic of the environmental cause advocates, hypothesizes that severe

environmental degradation will produce three principal types of conflict: the "simple scarcity" conflicts, noted in the previous section; "group identity" conflicts arising from large-scale movements of populations brought about by environmental change; and "relative deprivation" conflicts caused by the increasingly frustrated expectations of "have not" societies.<sup>117</sup> In his view, if global environmental damage increases the disparities between the haves and have-nots, poor nations may militarily confront rich ones for a greater share of the world's wealth.<sup>118</sup>

The most direct way that environmental factors impact on security may be through environmentally induced mass migration. Defining environmental refugees as those who can no longer sustain themselves in their usual homelands, Norman Myers and J. Kent, in a 1995 pamphlet "Environmental Exodus: An Emergent Crisis in the Global Arena" (produced for the Climate Institute) stated there were 25 million environmental refugees in sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian subcontinent, China, Mexico and Central America. That number, they predicted, is expected to double by 2010.<sup>119</sup> According to Myers and Kent, an even larger pool of potential migrants comes from peoples inhabiting marginal environments. Their research indicates that about 630 million of the 1.3 billion people in the world who endure

absolute poverty live in areas of low agricultural potential and 57 percent of that 630 million inhabit vulnerable environments.<sup>120</sup>

However, offering a much more benign interpretation, Astri Suhrke suggests that much of the migration caused by environmental degradation will be sufficiently gradual so as to spread the impact and give both migrants and the receiving areas time to adapt.<sup>121</sup> As he notes, "historically, migration has been both a solution and a problem, a source of both conflict and mutual enrichment."<sup>122</sup> He argues that rural out-migration, fed by environmental and economic stresses, does not explain all urban growth nor does it account for a great deal of social conflict in the developing world. He also argues that environmental refugees are to be viewed primarily as victims, not as threats, reflecting their "extreme powerlessness."

#### Demographic Causes of Conflict

From the time of Thomas Malthus, whose 1798 "An Essay on the Principle of Population as It Affects the Future Improvement of Society" argued that "the power of population is indefinitely (sic) greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man," demographics have been seen as having a role in conflict.<sup>123</sup> At the alarmist extreme are the "catastrophe demographers," who see population growth as the "out of control

factor" that will override every other determinant of the human condition.<sup>124</sup> Paul Kennedy claims that between 1995 and 2025, 95 percent of the world's population growth will have taken place in the developing nations, mostly because they will be enjoying their first generation of significantly decreased mortality.<sup>125</sup> He writes that "the overall consensus -- with the exception of a few revisionists -- is that the projected growth in the world's population cannot be sustained with our current patterns and levels of consumption."<sup>126</sup>

Levy describes a "neo-Malthusian perspective" which foresees the competition for scarce resources by rapidly growing and increasingly urbanized populations as causing economic and social problems, political instability and serious domestic and international crises.<sup>127</sup> Suhrke identifies a school of future analysis lead by Paul Kennedy and popularized by Robert Kaplan, which focuses on demographic trends, patterns of resource use and state structures. In Suhrke's view their analysis portrays a near catastrophic situation for the twenty-first century: a "South" beset by "increasing crises and conflicts generated by growing populations competing for declining resources, as well as by massive urbanization, uncontrollable migration and declining state capacity...."<sup>128</sup> A particularly troubling demographic in the developing world is the burgeoning population of unemployed or underemployed young men -- a potential source

of internal unrest and social instability in their own right, but also fertile ground for military or paramilitary recruiting.

Kennedy notes that in addition to the mitigating factors Malthus failed to take into account regarding population growth, such as emigration and the agricultural and industrial revolutions, another factor operating to mitigate excess population was internal unrest followed by external aggression. Territorial conquest, he argues, can and does serve as a vent for overpopulation, social tensions and political frustrations.<sup>129</sup> However, Stearns points out that where wars are concerned, population growth has yet to prove a major factor.<sup>130</sup> To date, at least, food production, if not distribution, has been able to meet the demands of population growth.

Commonly cited as current and future sources of conflict are population flows within and across international boundaries. Levy argues that population movements can contribute to conflicts within and between states.<sup>131</sup> This is so because migration can strain scarce resources in the host country; can change the balance of power among ethnic groups; or can be perceived as threatening the recipient nation's cultural identity. Myron Weiner points out that examples of forced or induced emigrations are found in incidents of ethnic cleansing stemming from situations where ethnic, religious, linguistic or tribal communities are divided by state boundaries.<sup>132</sup> Conflict

ensues when the recipient resorts to coercive threats or military intervention to block migratory flows. Conversely, according to Weiner, the decision to grant refugee status often creates an adversarial relationship with the country from which the refugees originate.<sup>133</sup> Or, the refugees may become political pawns in interstate conflicts (for example in the way that Cuban refugees have been used by both the U.S. and the Castro regime at various times).

While it seems fairly safe to assume that all of the conditions for and sources of conflict considered to this point will continue to generate refugee and migratory flows in the near- and mid-term, not all authorities see this as necessarily leading to conflict. Suhrke argues that conflict does not necessarily ensue when people are displaced.<sup>134</sup> Rural out-migration fed by environmental and economic stresses, in his view, has not been shown to explain all urban growth nor a great deal of social conflict in the developing world. As he notes, in a "value added model" migrants would be peacefully incorporated into the host society through providing needed labor and skills.

#### Technological Causes of Conflict

Geoffrey Kemp, in his essay "Military Technology and

Conflict," writes that the impact of military technology in particular on the prospects for conflict remains highly speculative.<sup>135</sup> He notes that arms competition between adversaries can itself become a source of conflict or precursor to war. The real issue, in his view, is the impact of weapons development and acquisition on the stability of military balances and the relationship between these balances and other factors that contribute to conflict. Similarly, Betts offers that "military forces, and particular technical aspects of their composition, can also become causes of conflict in their own right by altering the balance power and perceptions of threats, aggravating anxieties and creating incentives for preemptive attack."<sup>136</sup>

Another way in which technologies may be conflict-provoking is through the creation of massive, technologically generated unemployment. According to J. Rifkin, in The End of Work: The Decline of The Labor Force and the Dawn of The Post Market Era, "the new technologies are bringing us into an era of near workerless production at the very moment in history when the population is surging to unprecedented levels."<sup>137</sup> He believes the clash between growing population pressure and declining job opportunities will shape geo-politics "well into the next century." Kennedy offers that the major technological challenge of the twenty-first century will be to harness technology to

free the poorest three-fourths of humanity from the "Malthusian trap."<sup>138</sup> This challenge is compounded by the fact that the technological explosion is taking place in advanced societies geographically and economically removed from the areas where demographic forces are most powerful. Again turning to Kemp, he summarizes that "the one clear lesson from history" is that new technologies have the capacity both to provoke and restrain conflict.<sup>139</sup>

#### Cultural (or Civilizational) Causes of Conflict?

In many ways the least definable sources of conflict are those to which various authors and academics refer as either cultural or civilizational. The latter, perhaps the most controversial and yet most cited source of conflict since the phrase "the clash of civilizations" was coined by Samuel Huntington as the title for his landmark 1993 Foreign Affairs article, is not really a source of conflict at all, but rather a construct defining the principal world actors among whom the most significant conflicts will occur and where.<sup>140</sup> As such, a discussion of Huntington's paradigm could with equal appropriateness have occurred in the section of this paper discussing the structural sources of conflict. But because

aspects of his thesis serve to integrate the sources of conflict discussed previously, it is useful to include it here.

In the second paragraph of his article, Huntington hypothesizes that:

The fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.<sup>141</sup>

He defines a civilization as a cultural entity, "the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have...." "It is defined both by common objective elements, such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions, and by the subjective self-identification of people."<sup>142</sup> It is self-identification through culture that will be considered as a source of conflict in this section.

Dislocation and alienation resulting from social-economic modernization create a need for more meaningful identities at the individual level. Huntington offers that people define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs and institutions -- those aspects which together comprise what is commonly known as culture.<sup>143</sup> Huntington posits that in the contemporary world cultural identity is becoming

increasingly important compared to other forms of self-identification: "in the post-Cold War World the most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political or economic. They are cultural."<sup>144</sup> At the societal level, Huntington believes the enhanced capabilities and power of non-Western societies are stimulating the revitalization of indigenous and cultural identities.<sup>145</sup>

The increased extent to which people differentiate themselves culturally tends to define conflicts along cultural lines.<sup>146</sup> The central theme of his 1996 book expanding on the themes of his earlier Foreign Affairs article was that culture and cultural identities will be shaping the "patterns of cohesion, disintegration and conflict in the post-Cold War world."<sup>147</sup> "In this new world, the most pervasive, important and dangerous conflicts will not be between social classes, rich and poor, or other economically defined groups, but between peoples belonging to different cultural entities."<sup>148</sup>

Why might this be so? Paul Hassner believes that insecurities about the resilience of their cultural identity leads ethnic groups and even nations to "invent mythical ones [identities] and to define themselves with respect to equally mythical enemies," much as Iran has done under the ayatollahs in defining itself as the defender of the faith against the "great Satan" which is the West.<sup>149</sup> Susanne Rudolph puts it this way:

"Many of today's conflicts arise from group fears that they are culturally endangered species, that enemies seek their cultural, if not physical, annihilation."<sup>150</sup> Such fears, they believe, are the motivations which drive militant nationalists, religious radicals and ethnic cleansing. Hassner observes that this phenomenon is not limited to the non-Western cultures. Massive population movements to the West have contributed and will continue to contribute to societal insecurities in the West, both in terms of practical matters like jobs and in terms of intangible fears about cultural dilution (Brown, p. 134).<sup>151</sup>

Huntington and others see the West as contributing to cultural insecurities in the rest of the world through its economic and military dominance, its pervasiveness in the world media, its embrace of and efforts to promote modernity and modernization, and its policy goal of universal democratization.

Huntington writes,

Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures. Western efforts to propagate such ideas produce instead a reaction against "human rights imperialism" and a reaffirmation of indigenous values, as can be seen in the support for religious fundamentalism by the younger generation in non-Western cultures.<sup>152</sup>

According to Huntington, "the efforts of the West to promote its values..., to maintain its military predominance and to advance

its economic interests engender countering responses from other civilizations."<sup>153</sup> In Gurr's opinion, mass media and the near universality of electronic communications facilitate the conflict process by heightening cultural groups' awareness of their identities and shared interests, and by giving leaders the means to mobilize followers and coordinate actions.<sup>154</sup>

Moreover, the cultural basis of conflict may be furthered by what Huntington calls the "democratic paradox," the possibility that adoption by non-Western societies of Western democratic institutions will give access to power to nativist and anti-Western political movements based on ethnic, nationalistic or religious.<sup>155</sup> On the other hand, according to Gurr, opportunity mechanisms for cultural groups in established democracies provide "incentives for protest but disincentives for rebellion."<sup>156</sup> But in democratizing former autocracies, though the opportunities for cultural groups to mobilize are substantial, the institutional means to reach accommodation are usually lacking. "In these states, democratization is likely to facilitate ethnically based protest and rebellion."<sup>157</sup> Hassner sees an increasing divergence between political and cultural identities in modern society and offers as the ideal situation the preservation of cultural identities within a common post-national political framework.<sup>158</sup>

Those who view culture as a source of international interaction, tension or conflict see the world in the next century evolving into a half dozen or so entities or blocs along cultural or civilizational lines. For Rusi, "the thesis... is that, barring deliberate management of international relations, the world will evolve into four or five political-economic or cultural spaces or blocs."<sup>159</sup> These are: a European bloc; an East Asian bloc, around a "greater China" and an East Asian economic area; a pan-American bloc centered on the U.S.; a Slavic and Orthodox Russian bloc; and a Japan-centered economic bloc (possibly a satellite to the East Asian bloc). He does not include the Middle East or Africa among these blocs, though he writes that "I want to emphasize that the Middle East will remain or become one of the global power centers..., as a result of the strategic importance of the region."<sup>160</sup> He views Africa as a "strategically significant quartersphere" because its political and economic instability can become a source of global instability. Or, perhaps, because, as Bloom postulates, "the African and Near Eastern nations, which do not succeed easily at modernity...", will find "meaning and self assertion in varieties obscurantism."<sup>161</sup>

Huntington divides the post-Cold War world into as many as of seven or eight "civilizations." These parallel in many ways the blocs that Rusi postulates, though Huntington gives them

different names: Western (U.S./European), Confucian (or Sinic), Islamic, Hindu, Japanese, Slavic/Orthodox, and less certainly, African and Latin American.<sup>162</sup> However, Rusi argues that Huntington errs in ascribing primacy to culture as a future source of international conflict in that he "fails to understand the internal dynamics of different cultural spheres and their fundamental pluralism."<sup>163</sup> Perhaps the most significant way that culture relates to conflict is the way that it conditions a nation's response to change. As Paul Kennedy puts it, "the most important influence on a nation's responsiveness to change probably is its social attitudes, religious beliefs and culture."<sup>164</sup>

### Conclusions

The fundamental questions which remain regarding future sources of conflict are ones which can best be expressed by paraphrasing the Watergate prosecutor's incisive questions concerning the misdeeds of then President Richard Nixon: what may we know as to future sources of conflict and when may we know it? Regarding the "what," research leads to the inescapable conclusion that the sources of conflict in the future will be, as they are now, many and various. While all of the factors under discussion may be considered valid and

contributory, it is most likely that significant conflict in the future will ensue when some simultaneous combination occurs.

Certainly, any paradigm that envisions a single or dominant source of conflict should be viewed with skepticism, according to predictive theory. The presence of a single conflictual factor and an assessment, derived through analogy, trend analysis or logic, that it is likely to continue to exist well into the future, is not a sufficient foundation upon which to base a prediction.

Moreover, how the one views the sources of conflict in the twenty-first century depends to a large extent on how one sees the structural nature and evolution of the international system. As envisioned by the Tofflers, it will be "a complex new global system made up of regions, corporations, religions, non-governmental organizations and political movements..."<sup>165</sup> The realist sees a "multi-polar world order based on rival trading blocs centered on the big powers...." For the neo-realist it will be a "new bi-polarity" between China and the Euro-Atlantic bloc," following a hegemonic war. Both bi- and multi-polarity are considered possibilities by Rusi.<sup>166</sup>

More likely, as Levy puts it, "a few diehard realists" notwithstanding, factors in addition to systemic structures will account for outbreaks of conflict or their expansion in the future.<sup>167</sup> It is apparent that transnational forces are

increasingly bypassing and ultimately changing the nature and influence of the international system in ways about which we can speculate but not predict with any certainty. Globalization, the increasing presence and influence of international non-governmental organizations involving a broad range of disciplines, as well as cultural and environmental factors, are all operating on and being affected by the multiple sources of conflict. And these conflict causes in turn are often affected by numerous intervening variables and linked by interactive and sometimes synergistic relationships.

Regarding the "when," it is highly likely that all the forces and factors identified in this study will be operative in the twenty-first century. It is also likely that the congruence of several them will be required for significant conflict to occur, then as now. It is the value of scholars and futurists like Huntington, Kennedy and Rusi to policy makers and planners that they not only identify the forces and factors leading to conflict, but also give some insights as to when and where vigilance ought to be applied in looking for that congruence. The predictive limitation results from the immense complexities inherent in the processes through which these forces and factors operate.

It is up to the nation's strategic planners and policy makers to use those insights to guide the efforts to remain

engaged and to shape a favorable international environment. To be fully effective, strategic policy planning needs to consider not only the means for addressing symptoms of future conflict but also its sources and causes. This requires an information and intelligence gathering effort less focused on traditional enemies but increasingly broad in scope to encompass the wide range, both geographic and functional, of future sources of conflict.

In fact, it is becoming increasingly clear that the traditional way of viewing the international security environment and the attendant policies for defense and diplomacy as a two-dimensional construct of contending geopolitical actors is no longer adequate. For the twenty-first century the international security environment will be best understood as a multi-layered, multi-dimensional construct inhabited by diverse, dispersed and ephemeral actors only some of whom will be traditional nation-states. And all of these actors will be motivated or constrained by some of the global forces described in this paper. The watchwords for strategists and force planners in the future will be "alertness" and "flexibility."

WORD COUNT = 11006

## ENDNOTES

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